The Iberian World
1450–1820
Fernando Bouza, Pedro Cardim, Antonio Feros

Patterns of conquest and settlement of the Iberian Americas

Publication details
https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780429283697-16
Stuart B. Schwartz
Published online on: 18 Sep 2019

How to cite: - Stuart B. Schwartz. 18 Sep 2019, Patterns of conquest and settlement of the Iberian Americas from: The Iberian World, 1450–1820 Routledge
Accessed on: 11 Oct 2023
https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780429283697-16

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT

Full terms and conditions of use: https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.
CHAPTER FIFTEEN

PATTERNS OF CONQUEST AND SETTLEMENT OF THE IBERIAN AMERICAS

Stuart B. Schwartz

INTRODUCTION

Although Castile was three times larger in area than its neighbour to the west, and had a population of about 8.5 million, or over five times the size of Portugal’s 1.5 million, during the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, both of these kingdoms, moved by similar economic and social forces, and by religious motives and missionary zeal, established settlements in the Americas, and integrated them into imperial systems. Drawing on their own populations, but also on human and capital resources from elsewhere in Europe, Portugal, and Spain (integrating Castile as part of a composite monarchy) used medieval precedents, institutions, and models, but modified them according to geographical and ecological realities and local conditions, especially those created by the nature, size, and density of the indigenous populations that they encountered. The history of Iberian conquest and colonisation in the Americas thus was marked both by strong parallels between the actions and imperial objectives of Spain and Portugal, but also by a significant degree of variation, not only between the two monarchies, but also within the areas under control of each. Those local and regional differences generated primarily by geophysical characteristics, economic potential, and the size and social complexity of the indigenous populations determined to a large extent the pace and spaces of settlement, the stages of colonisation, and the character of society within, and political control over, the vast territories claimed by the two monarchies.

IBERIAN AND ATLANTIC ORIGINS

The Iberian conquest and settlement of the Americas was prefaced by their experience at home and in the Atlantic. Portugal, having captured the last Muslim territories and established a monarchy independent of Castilian sovereignty by the late fourteenth century, began a process of centralisation at that time, although its rulers maintained many aspects of feudal and patrimonial administration. In Castile, the
process of unification under Christian rule took a century longer, finally succeeding when Muslim Granada fell in 1492. Both Castile and Portugal had been strongly affected by their long, and often contentious medieval history of multi-religious contact with Muslims and Jews, and by a sense of religious fervour born from the reconquest campaigns which included the conversion (voluntary or forced) of the conquered populations. By 1500, Christian religious unification of Iberia had been achieved with the conversion or expulsion of Castilian Jews (1492), the forced conversion of Jews in Portugal (1497), and a program of conversion of those Muslims left in Iberia.

Over the long course of reconquest, a series of customs and practices developed that the Spaniards extended to the Indies. These included royal authorisation of military campaigns conveyed through a legal contract (capitulación) to a commander (adelantado) who often financed the expedition himself. Enlistment depended on voluntary military service, but there were strict rules in the distribution of booty, and also an expectation of reward, usually in the form of land in the conquered territory. The process of reconquest also included the foundation of towns in a captured territory, the close cooperation of civil and ecclesiastical authority, the mobilisation of orders of knighthood as a royal military cadre, and the sponsorship of privately organised raids or campaigns, all of which provided models and expectations for the later Iberian experience, first in the Canary Islands and then in the Americas.

In the fifteenth century, Portuguese interests in cereals and gold led first to outpost settlements in Morocco, and then down the African coast, and into the Atlantic itself. The Portuguese created “factories” (feitorias) or commercial outposts on the coast of West Africa from which gold, ivory, and, after 1441, slaves were shipped to Europe. Powerful African kingdoms and Portugal’s own limited resources discouraged settlement on the west African coast itself, but the Portuguese did colonise unoccupied island groups like Madeira (1418), the Azores (1427) the Cape Verde islands (1462) and Sao Tomé and Príncipe (1471). This push into the South Atlantic eventually became directed towards opening a sea route into the Indian Ocean, a dream realised in 1498 with Vasco da Gama’s voyage. A landfall on the Brazilian coast in 1500 by a subsequent Portuguese fleet to India did little to distract Portugal from its goal to create a maritime empire in Asia. Even so, it is important to emphasise that the Portuguese could draw on a century of overseas settlement, commerce, and contact with other populations prior to the development of Brazil.

The Portuguese had not been alone in the Atlantic. Genoese, Mallorcan, Catalans, and Andalucians had also been active. Castile had contested claims to the Canary Islands with the Portuguese, and after prolonged conflict, it had wrested control of most of the islands from the indigenous Guanche population. By treaty with Portugal (Treaty of Alcaçovas, 1479) Castile won recognition of its sovereignty in return for acknowledging Portugal’s control of the Azores and Madeira and the west coast of Africa. The papacy granted Castile responsibility for the evangelisation of the Canary Islands, and then after Columbus’ voyage in 1492, it had, over Portuguese objections, expanded papal recognition of Castilian claims to new lands further westward. The competing claims of Castile and Portugal were finally resolved by the bilateral Treaty of Tordesillas (1494) which solidified a Portuguese sphere of influence in the eastern Atlantic and southward down the African coast and recognised a Castilian sphere to the west. Both the Portuguese in the uninhabited Madeira islands
and São Tomé and the Castilians in the Canaries began to settle these islands, and
drawing on Genoese and Northern European capital, and then on the importation
of slaves from the African coast, began to develop sugar plantations that by the 1480s
were exporting large amounts of good quality sugar to Europe. The patterns of
settlement, the technology, and the organisation of these Atlantic island settlements
provided examples and models for the later colonisation in the Americas, although
for much of the sixteenth century these islands were also the principal rivals of the
first American settlements.

STAGES AND TYPES OF COLONIAL SETTLEMENTS

The conquest and settlement of Iberian Americas can be conceptualised in a number
of stages over the period from 1492 to ca. 1700 (Lockhart and Schwartz 1984; also
Céspedes del Castillo 1983; Pietschmann 1989; Garavaglia y Marchena 2005). In
both empires there was an initial period of first contact of two or three decades in
which state presence remained limited and exploration, settlement, and economic
development was largely in the hands of individuals under royal concession, con-
tract, or license. In this period, contact with indigenous peoples was mostly unregu-
lated and highly dependent on the economic needs of the Europeans. After an initial
peaceful encounter, these early contacts were often accompanied by violence, and by
rapid indigenous demographic losses due to warfare, social dislocation, and disease.
For Spain, this stage of first contact took place mostly on the large islands of the
Caribbean, and its general outline subsequently served as a model for the practices,
vocabulary, social arrangements, and institutions that later would be transferred and
readapted in other areas of the Americas.

The continuity of the Mediterranean and Atlantic worlds was embodied in the
career and actions of Columbus, a Genoese mariner sailing for Castile in 1492 who
had considerable experience with the use of “feitorias”, which in Europe had been
strictly commercial bases, but that the Portuguese in Africa had established with
military and political functions. These experiences influenced his own conception of
his rights, and goals. The presence of foreigners like him, and of foreign capital, had
been a common aspect of the early Iberian experience in the Atlantic that would also
characterise the first decades of settlement in the Americas. Columbus conceived of
his settlement on Española as a proprietary enterprise and trading monopoly, and he
treated the original contingent of 1,200 men (no women) that he brought in 1494 on
his second voyage as strictly controlled, salaried employees in his service. Frustrated
by these conditions and by their limited access to gold or Indian workers, the latter
in part because of the efforts of missionaries sent to convert the native inhabitants,
the disgruntled employees, hoping for the practices of reconquest Spain where lands
and privileges had been distributed in recompense for military service, broke with
Columbus and his faction. He was forced to place groups of indigenous labourers in
the hands of individual Spaniards, a system of reward and labour organisation that
was regularised when Fray Nicolás de Ovando succeeded the Columbus family in
1501 as the principal governmental authority. This system, eventually known as the
encomienda, was widely used throughout Spanish America to mobilise indigenous
labour, and to satisfy the ambitions and reward the service of the conquerors and
colonists. The struggle and disruption over this transition from the commercial trade
factory to a settlement model of colonisation led to the gradual loss of Columbus’ proprietary rights and privilege.

The arrival of Ovando, establishment of a court of appeals (audiencia) in 1511, and the creation of three bishoprics in that same year, all underlined an increasing level of royal and ecclesiastical administration which by 1520 was well established in the city of Santo Domingo. By that date, exploration, conquest, and settlement had begun on Puerto Rico (1508), Jamaica (1509), Cuba (1512), and other islands as well as on the mainland coasts of Panama (1509) and Colombia (1514), where the search for gold or Indian slaves continued, or on the coast of Venezuela (Nueva Cádiz ca. 1515) where the oyster beds could be exploited for pearls, once again utilising forced labour. Missionaries had initiated a campaign to stop the slave raids and abuse of the indigenous populations, which on many of the islands had suffered a precipitous decline. On Española alone, the native population had dropped from 60,000 in 1508 to about 26,000 by 1514, and after a smallpox epidemic in late 1519, to under 3,000. By the 1530s, the stream of immigrants to the Caribbean islands had become a trickle as the gold mining on Española and Puerto Rico had diminished and the new conquests in Mexico and Peru now attracted potential settlers. The islands began a transition to sugar production, livestock raising, ginger, and other kinds of agriculture, or in the case of Cuba, to maritime provisioning, especially from its northern coastal city of Havana.

Further south, Portuguese early contact on the Brazilian coast began about a decade after the Colombian voyage, but seeming to lack gold, Brazil drew little royal interest or a flow of colonists. The Portuguese Crown remained more interested in Asia and thus in Brazil it employed a model of commercial colonisation for a longer period. It supported small, scattered enclaves where merchants, mariners, castaways, and a few settlers cohabited and bartered with native inhabitants to cut dyewood and to serve as allies against European (principally French) competitors. Unlike Castile in the Caribbean, there was almost no missionary activity to convert or protect the indigenous peoples. Only foreign competition brought a change. In 1530, the king, Dom João III, dispatched a royal expedition to clear the coast of rivals and begin settlement. It created the town of São Vicente (1532). Simultaneously, drawing on precedents used in the colonisation of the Atlantic islands, Portugal initiated a program to divide the Brazilian coast into 15 proprietary grants or captaincies to be held by nobles who would use their own resources to promote colonisation and settlement.

Despite differences in chronology and in their first decades of contact in the Americas, there were also marked similarities in the Spanish and Portuguese experiences of occupation. In both cases early contact was carried out with limited state involvement, using arrangements modelled on previous Atlantic experience, and drawing on common traditions of commercial contacts. Both Spaniards and Portuguese first encountered indigenous peoples who practiced semi-sedentary agriculture, and thus had some resources that could be expropriated. The Castilians, needing workers in the gold washings and to supply food, mobilised and exploited the Taino peoples of the islands of the Greater Antilles to such an extent that by the 1520s, the Spaniards were extensively raiding other islands to make up for the diminishing population. This raiding did expand Spanish knowledge of the region’s geography, but it also provoked a century of firm resistance of peoples from the
Lesser Antilles that the Spaniards referred to as “Caribs” (savages). The Portuguese, needing indigenous workers to find dyewood and to supply food stuffs, at first depended on barter and marriage alliances rather than on conquest or force, although they too were confronted by indigenous enemies: Tapuyas (non-Tupi speakers) who like the Caribs were considered savages; or by those Tupi-speakers who were allied with Portugal’s French rivals. It was only with the attempts at settlement under the donatary captaincy system and the development of a sugar industry that Portuguese relations with the native peoples changed from barter to slavery.

The contact phase in the Caribbean and on the coast of Brazil provided previews of patterns of settlement that would be followed elsewhere by the Iberians, but this early phase differed in the Caribbean in the sense that the indigenous population was so rapidly destroyed, and never recovered. Instead, the Caribbean provided an early example of the replacement of the decimated original population by the importation of African slaves, beginning slowly by 1508 with the arrival of black slaves from Spain, and by the 1530s in increasing numbers from Africa, as their principal role changed from domestic servants to agricultural workers, especially on the growing number of sugar mills. Curiously, this process drew the parallel stories of the Spanish and Portuguese into direct contact because many early Portuguese emigrants who left for Brazil ended up in the Caribbean, attracted by gold and opportunities there, and eventually Portuguese contractors and suppliers from Portugal’s West African outposts dominated the slave trade to the Caribbean (Ventura 1999).

CONQUEST AND SETTLEMENT

The foundational contact stage in the New World was followed by an era of conquest and settlement from roughly 1520 to 1570 but varying in duration and character by region. After the first decades in the Caribbean, the Spanish conquest and occupation of the vast American continents took place rapidly, but selectively over the course of the next 50 years (New Spain, 1519–1535; Peru 1533–1545; New Granada, 1537–1549). The societies that formed were shaped to a large extent by Hispanic ideals and social practices as well as by the previous decades of experience, but there were also regional differences due in large part to the character and influence of the dominant pre-conquest indigenous cultures and polities.

As in the Caribbean, the conquests were usually carried out by semi-independent military operations, with royal concessions or rewards to ambitious leaders (often including the position of governor), opportunities for rapid social mobility by some participants, and by the reduction of indigenous populations to European civil and ecclesiastical authority, although this control was often mediated by integrating native leaders or elites into the structure of government. Taking possession of new territories continued in a leap-frog pattern with the conquest of each area spinning off subsequent expeditions composed of unsatisfied participants in the previous effort, ambitious late-comers, and by large numbers of indigenous servants and auxiliaries from the last area conquered. In Spanish America, the major military operations of a conquest were usually followed by a period of political instability caused by tensions between the successful leader and the crown, or between his faction and his rivals over the spoils. In general, each conquest was followed by the abuse and decline of indigenous populations made worse by the spread of epidemic
diseases, the emergence of a semi-independent conqueror-encomendero elite, and in some areas, by the discovery of mineral wealth, all of which eventually moved the crown to intervene by reducing the authority of the original conqueror and his faction and to impose bureaucratic controls and the formal institutions of law and government.

The island of Española served as the initial launching pad for the subsequent conquests. To the north, slave raiding decimated the population of the Bahamas after which the Spanish showed little interest in these "useless islands". Other expeditions like that of Ponce de León (1508) and Vázquez de Ayllón (1525) reached Florida but produced few results. Eventually, Spain created a fortress town at St Augustine (1565) to protect the sea route to Spain, but Spanish settlements and missionary activity in the region were minimal. This was a pattern much repeated. Areas like the eastern slopes of the Andes or the desert regions of northwestern Mexico that lacked large native populations that could produce an agricultural surplus and provide labourers, or that lacked deposits of mineral wealth, were often underfunded or ignored, and after exploration were left relatively unsettled. These were areas that later would be turned over to mendicant missionary orders whose task was to convert the local inhabitants and turn them from barbarians into Christians, or more exactly from Indians into peasants.

Starting from Española, the Spanish thrusts to the mainland followed two principal trajectories. The first began in Castilla de Oro (Panama) where for a while a considerable amount of gold was extracted. A second expedition followed, sailing directly from Seville in 1514, and subsequently some of its participants organised the successful strike southward to the Inca empire in Peru (1532–1534). The trajectory from Española took Cuba and then moved on to Yucatan and next to Central Mexico, where the Aztec confederation was conquered (1519–1521). The pace and intensity of the two trajectories depended to some extent on the nature and attractions of each region. The conquest of Mexico under Hernán Cortés was launched by the governor of Cuba, and while the number of Spaniards involved was relatively small, the conquistadors received considerable help from large numbers of indigenous allies and "ethnic soldiers" (Whitehead 1990). The territory of the Aztec empire fell rather quickly, and from the former Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan which Cortés now made his capital as well, the Spaniards expanded their control over Michoacán and Oaxaca by 1530. Fighting, however, in Yucatan, where there was no central imperial authority for the Spaniards to seize, dragged on for years, as it did in the areas of nomadic peoples north of the dense populations of central Mexico.

Starting from Panama, Francisco Pizarro and his band of 168 companions carried out a relatively rapid campaign against the Inca empire in Peru (aided here as well by indigenous allies). After the fall of the Inca capital of Cuzco (1533), the pre-existing Inca imperial structure and lines of communication, aided Spanish occupation, despite a rebellion and then the survival of a centre of neo-Inca resistance at Vilcabamba (1537–1572). Northern South America was conquered in the 1530s by expeditions moving southward from the Caribbean coast and another striking northward from Quito after the conquest of Peru. Attracted by the dense indigenous populations of the Chibcha peoples in the Andean highlands and a considerable amount of gold in the area, the cities of Cartagena (1533), Bogotá (1537), and Tunja...
(1538) established Spanish occupation of this region of New Granada as an extension of the Peruvian orbit.

After the fall of the great Inca and Mexica indigenous imperial states, a second wave of expeditions, attracted by rumours of wealth or great empires still to be conquered, ventured into other areas. These efforts were often notable for their courage and violence, but also for their failure to produce lasting settlement or occupation. In the 1540s, Hernando de Soto’s expedition from Cuba to the southeastern part of North America (1539–1542), Coronado’s venture from Central Mexico into the southwest of the present United States (1540–1542) and Gonzalo Pizarro’s penetration from Quito into the Amazonian rainforest (1541–1542), all failed to find exploitable resources or to serve as the basis of permanent Spanish occupation. The chronicler Francisco López de Gómara put his finger on a key to their failure when he said critically of de Soto’s expedition, “He did not populate the land.” Pedro de Valdivia’s 1541 expedition from Cuzco southward to Chile did establish the city of Santiago, but it was hard pressed to survive the resistance of the local Araucanians, and that region long remained a military frontier. Further to the east, a large expedition of 1535 that had sailed directly from Seville to the Rio de la Plata region founded the city of Buenos Aires, but a native siege forced the Spaniards to abandon the small outpost, although some of the expedition’s members moved up river to settle among the agricultural Guaraní peoples on the Paraguay river and founded the city of Asunción. It was only in 1580 that the Spanish returned to settle Buenos Aires at the mouth of the La Plata.

Overall, the speed of the conquest of two continents and an inland sea was impressive. By 1550, the occupation had taken place in the areas of sedentary indigenous societies, the core areas of New Spain and Peru, and the neighbouring regions of sedentary or semi-sedentary agricultural peoples such as Central America, New Granada, northern Chile, Paraguay, and New Mexico. On the edges of these regions there remained frontier zones of nomadic hunters much less accessible to Spanish occupation and much less attractive, at least so long as silver or gold were not discovered. But while the speed of Spanish conquest was impressive, great areas of the interior of North America and South America remained outside of Spanish control and virtually off limits to Spanish settlement.

In Brazil, the captaincy system introduced in 1534 did produce some small settlements, but the Portuguese for most of the sixteenth century remained, “like crabs on shoreline” as Frei Vicente do Salvador, a Franciscan friar and Brazil’s first historian, stated (Salvador 2008, Vol. I, bk 1, ch. 3). Their settlements formed a coastal archipelago of port towns and surrounding agricultural areas that extended from Pernambuco southward to Guanabara Bay, where after the expulsion of a French colony, the Portuguese established the city of Rio de Janeiro in 1565. Some 230 miles further south, only the small town of São Paulo, created at a former Jesuit mission, broke the pattern of coastal settlement. Its location at the confluence of two rivers on plateau some 30 miles from the coast gave it access to the interior. For the most part, the Portuguese from the other settlements only penetrated the interior or sertão on occasional, and mostly unsuccessful, searches for mineral wealth, in raids for Indian captives, or eventually as they pushed livestock herding into lands unsuited for sugar or tobacco. North of Pernambuco, the occupation of the enormous areas
of Maranhão and the lands at the mouth of the Amazon came mostly to keep out foreign rivals and was delayed until the early seventeenth century.

The population of European origin in Brazil remained tiny; less than 20,000 as late as 1570, and over half of it concentrated in the two captaincies of Bahia and Pernambuco. By 1600, the colony as a whole may have had 100,000 people but only about 35,000 of European or mixed origin and the majority composed of indigenous people under Portuguese control and a growing number of Africans. With its small population and spotty settlement pattern, the occupation of Brazil seemed to differ considerably from the Spanish conquest and occupation of the great populous centres of Mexico or the Andean region, but if the comparison is limited to the Spanish settlement of more marginal regions like Paraguay or Venezuela then the similarities become more apparent. Moreover, it should be emphasised that like the Portuguese in Brazil, the Spanish occupation of the continents had also left large areas virtually uncontrolled because the costs of settlement did not seem to be worth the benefits. In some ways, Brazil’s First Contact stage that paralleled the Spanish Caribbean experience started a decade later and simply lasted longer. Despite utopian rumours of gold fields and emerald mountains, there were no great empires to attract them to abandon their Atlantic ports and the small surrounding agricultural zones.

In Brazil, the “conquest era” was simply an extension of Portuguese control of the coast, driven for the most part by the partial failure of the donatarial settlements and by the developing of the sugar industry’s need for constant agricultural workers. While the Portuguese Crown was unwilling to assume all the costs of settlement and government of Brazil and still recognised the donatarial captaincies or even created new ones, it now moved to take control of the colony. In 1549 a large expedition under a royal governor created a capital city at Salvador in the captaincy of Bahia and established the presence of royal judicial and treasury officers in the colony. Two years later a bishopric was established there as well. Six Jesuit missionaries had also arrived with the governor, and that religious order soon became the most important spiritual force in Brazil, especially in terms of the conversion and protection of the indigenous peoples who at this moment were particularly vulnerable.

By the 1540s, a Portuguese shift from barter to enslavement of the indigenous populations in combination with agricultural disruption, and epidemic diseases, caused widespread depopulation. Many native peoples fled to the interior of the continent or sought protection in Jesuit mission villages, but the latter made them more vulnerable to epidemics like that of 1562–1563 that swept through the indigenous populations. Under influence from the Jesuits, the Portuguese Crown issued its first attempt to limit indigenous slavery in 1570 (others followed in 1585 and 1609) but it was not effective, and by that time the coastal indigenous population had so dwindled that a transition to enslaved African labour was already under way. A Jesuit missionary, Father José de Anchieta, wrote from Bahia in the late 1560s with incredulity about the destruction of the native peoples, or as he said, “no one could believe that, so many people would ever be used up, let alone in such a short time” (Schwartz 1985, 28). Following the pattern of the Atlantic littoral, the wars of conquest in Brazil accompanied by occupation of new territories and the destruction or removal of native peoples continued in the same pattern into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.
CONQUEST SOCIETIES

Despite the dangers, the high costs of maritime transportation and supply, and various government restrictions, about 200,000 Spaniards emigrated to America during the sixteenth century (Boyd-Bowman 1973; Sánchez Albornoz 1974). Over a third (37%) came from Andalucia and other 15% from the western region of Extremadura, and most of the remainder from Castile and León, although there was usually a good representation of Basques as well. The Indies were legally incorporated into the Crown of Castile, and so there were restrictions prohibiting subjects from the Crown of Aragon from holding office in them, but nevertheless, some did participate in the early expeditions and settlements as did an important smattering of foreigners (Portuguese, Italians, Greeks, and some northern Europeans). Non-Catholics, converts from Judaism (conversos) or Islam (moriscos) and their descendants, criminals, and women of ill-repute were all at one time or another prohibited from residence in America, but there were constant violations and evasion of these restrictions. Before 1540, women composed only 6% of the Spanish immigrants, but between 1560 and 1580 that figure rose to almost 30% of the arrivals. Half of that number was from Seville and surrounding towns. By 1570 there were perhaps 220,000 “Spaniards” (and other Europeans) resident in the Spanish Indies, although the definition of “Spaniard” was based on culture and status, and not exclusively on place of birth. The immigrants brought with them their norms and social and cultural understandings, but local practices, the experience of those who immigrated before them, and opportunity resulted in a stripped-down version of Hispanic culture heavily influenced by Andalusian and maritime traditions and vocabulary. This new and innovative “conquest culture”, formed in the Caribbean, was then further modified and transformed by subsequent experiences and contact with indigenous peoples as Spanish control spread over the rest of the Americas (Foster 1960, 10–20).

Regional associations and kinship ties were often important in creating migration chains, and continual immigration from particular towns in Spain to particular regions in America was common. These ties and affiliations often played a crucial role in the organisation of expeditions, and in the distribution of rewards to the dismay of those who were left out. Added to these personal ties were the traditional social divisions of Hispanic society with distinctions maintained between gentlemen (hidalgos) and commoners, and an ordering of society based on social class or juridical estate. But the conquest also created new distinctions and a new form of hierarchy based on the antiquity of service. Those who had participated in the original expeditions of conquest were considered conquerors and were favoured in the award of encomiendas or other benefits. Those who had arrived at later stages of a conquest could claim the status of poblador antiguo or settler and also enjoy privileged treatment, but social rank also played a role in what an individual could expect. Mariners hardly ever received a grant of Indians, hidalgos of good lineage almost always received one. Nevertheless, the conquest and the use of arms in general provided new possibilities for upward mobility as commoners assumed the attitudes and perquisites of gentlemen. As a Viceroy of Peru remarked in 1582, “in the Indies everyone is a gentleman, and this is the thing that most populates them” (Lohmann Villena 1947, xxii).
We can identify three essential characteristics that defined the nature of conquest society created by the first two generations. The first was the essentially urban character of Spanish settlement; an extension of Mediterranean patterns building on Roman and Islamic urbanism and on a strong Iberian tradition of municipal government. During the reconquest, cities had been the spear point of the acquisition and Christianisation of new territories, and municipalities were granted broad autonomous control over justice, the Church, and local matters. This use of the city to establish “civilised” life in newly settled lands among hostile or non-Christian populations was now transported to the Indies. The Castilian ideal of stable urban settlements with resident householders (vecinos), and a town council (cabildo) with jurisdiction over the surrounding countryside and authority over urban life and law became the norm. Cities like San Juan, Santiago de Cuba, and Havana and smaller towns (villas) flourished in the Caribbean and then spread across the Spanish Indies (Kagan 2000). The crown encouraged the foundation and even prescribed the grid-plan the layout of these urban areas, and in 1573 issued a law codifying these instructions. By 1600, the Spanish rulers had granted municipal charters to over 250 cities and towns.

The Spaniards conceptualised the urban centres as the appropriate places for “civilised” residence in contrast to the despoblado, the countryside inhabited by indigenous villages. In parts of New Spain and in highland Peru, the Europeans encountered an indigenous urbanism that seemed parallel to their own traditions, and they usurped it, turning Native American urban centres like Cuzco, Quito, and Tenochtitlan into Spanish cities, sometimes intentionally appropriating the previous ceremonial or symbolic importance of sites to solidify their control. They also adopted indigenous urban hierarchies of regional centres and dependent towns for their own administrative purposes introducing Hispanic forms of urban government, and where control of the scattered indigenous population was difficult, the Spaniards congregated them in new towns. Where needed, the Spaniards created new administrative cities like Lima (1535) or ports like Vera Cruz (1519) or mining centres like Potosí (1545) in Upper Peru or Zacatecas (1546) in Mexico. Along the major lines of communication from ports to major cities or between and the mining towns, important secondary towns developed. Even those Spaniards who eventually owned large rural properties or spent considerable amounts of time in indigenous villages were required by law to maintain a residence in an urban centre. By the 1550s, this pattern was already well established, and thus for much of the colonial era Spanish America was an “empire of towns”, characterised by Hispanic cities where capital, government authority, and the white population, especially Spanish women, tended to concentrate, in contrast to a predominantly indigenous countryside inhabited by the vast majority of the population.

Creation of a town was invariably accompanied by the distribution of a house plot and a supporting grant of property outside of town to those who would become the citizens of the town. All Spaniards were expected to maintain an urban residence. High officials of the state and Church resided in the major cities as did members of the elite and the artisans and craftsmen needed to serve their needs. Poorer Spaniards resided there too, but many were pushed outward toward secondary towns. Spanish cities and towns always included indigenous neighbourhoods or outskirts that provided the labourers and artisans who, along with the large numbers of African
slaves and freed persons, also populated all the major cities. Rural landscapes were also urbanised. The pueblo de indios was the natural companion to the Spanish city. In New Spain from 1550–1564 as Indian populations declined Spanish friars relocated the remaining population into new settlements, often aided by caciques who took new Hispanic municipal offices to reinforce their authority. In the following decade, the Peruvian Viceroy Francisco de Toledo attempted a general resettlement of over a million people. This great social experiment was disruptive, but it indicated the extent to which the ideas of urbanism, state control of its resources, and the desire to make populations “legible” to state and Church authorities influenced colonial policy (Mumford 2012).

The city thus became the focus of social and political life. Prominent vecinos (householders), actively sought out offices within the town councils, sometimes buying them in perpetuity, and the council members became a kind self-aggrandising urban patriciate. In the period before 1580, these council posts were often held by the encomenderos, those men who had received grants of Indian communities. Perhaps the defining characteristic of the Conquest stage in the territory claimed by Castile was the importance of the encomienda and the power and predominance of the encomenderos as an elite class. Cortés had reluctantly introduced the Caribbean precedent of encomiendas during the conquest of Mexico. Thereafter it was adopted and in all subsequent conquered areas as an effective and relatively inexpensive way both to satisfy the ambitions of the members of the expeditions, and to establish control over the indigenous populations by extracting tribute or labour service from them. Although originally a form of land grant in reconquest Castile, implying reciprocal military service, in the Americas, no land title was involved, and the obligations of the grantees became less military and more administrative, including the responsibility to provide for the Catholic religious life of the communities in the grant. Essentially, this made the encomenderos an elite supported by a form of vassalage that implied for them a steady income and a dependent population. In the areas like central Mexico or highland Peru, where a structure of provinces and city states existed before the conquest, encomienda grants were often large and substantial and could involve a whole pre-Columbian state (altepetal). In frontier areas like New Mexico or Chile they tended to be smaller and less stable but throughout the Indies, obtaining an encomienda became a primary objective of the conquest generation of Spaniards since other promised rewards like noble titles or membership in orders of knighthood, or titles of nobility were rare in the sixteenth century. Still, not every ambition was satisfied. Only 91 men out of about 2,000 (4.5%) in the conquest of Panama received an encomienda; in Mexico, only about 400 of Cortés’ companions at the fall of Tenochtitlan received one; and in Peru by 1555 only 6% of the 8,000 Spaniards there held an encomienda (Góngora 1975; Lockhart 1994; Himmerich y Valencia 1991).

The encomenderos dominated the municipal councils in the Hispanic cities, controlling large number of indigenous workers, and seeking to assume the role of a New World nobility. Missionaries who complained of the disastrous demographic and social effects of the encomiendas on the newly converted Indians opposed such noble pretensions and sought to limit them. By the 1540s, as the crown sought to impose more control over the Indies, powerful clerical criticisms of the abuses of
the institution and its impact on native populations were supported by a Spanish
Crown reluctant to see the emergence of a new, semi-independent American nobility
with perpetual control over large numbers of indigenous vassals. The New Laws of
1542 which sought to eliminate the granting of new encomiendas and to limit their
inheritability was met by hostility in the Indies by the leading elites. In Mexico, the
viceroy suspended the law to avoid disaster, but in Peru, resistance resulted in a civil
war, the murder of the viceroy, and a smouldering rebellion (1544–1548) that only
ended when the provisions of the law were softened.

To some extent, however, demography and economics rather than politics
resolved the problem. Despite the uproar, the crown’s desire to eliminate the encomi-
enda was obvious. In 1536 about a quarter of the Spaniards in Peru held a grant of
Indians, but by 1555 that ratio was only one out of every 16. The precipitous decline
of the indigenous population so reduced the benefits of holding an encomienda
that the descendants of the conquerors and pobladores now preferred land which
now seemed a more secure basis of wealth. In frontier regions like Chile and New
Mexico, the encomienda remained important into the eighteenth century, but in the
core regions of New Spain and Peru, it was replaced by state organised systems of
required, but remunerated labour imposed on indigenous communities. This shift
was a major change in the patterns of occupation and settlement that differentiated
the Conquest and Settlement era from what followed.

In Brazil, the process of populating the colony and the development of a social
hierarchy was somewhat different. Overseas emigration from Portugal between
1500 and 1640 has been estimated at about 4,000 annually, a not insignificant
number for a population never more than three million people in those years, but
much of it went to the Atlantic islands, the Portuguese outposts in Asia and Africa,
or to Spanish America rather than to Brazil. Needing moradores (settlers) to occupy
the enormous area of Brazil, Portugal tried various measures: sending orphan girls
to marry in the colony, denying for a century requests to establish convents, and
most of all, dispatching convicts to Brazil like the contingent of 400 who accom-
panied the first royal governor in 1549. Later, the Portuguese Crown at various times
sent couples from the Azores to populate the southern captaincies and the coast
of Maranhão, and at times suggestions to send Italians or Galicians were floated
as well. In addition, perhaps 20% of the early immigrants were “New Christians
(converts from Judaism) attracted by the opportunities and by the distance from
scrutiny. The Lisbon region contributed many immigrants, but above all the early
settlers were poor folk from Minho and the overcrowded north of Portugal where
land was in short supply.

Apparently without mineral deposits to be exploited or large indigenous peas-
antries to provide tribute, the immigrants who did go were not so much interested
in Indian tributaries as they were in acquiring land which with a few Indian slaves
would provide an adequate livelihood. As in the Atlantic islands, the donaty-
captains and later governors distributed large land grants (sesmarias) and eventually
a system of smaller properties and a land market developed around them. As a des-
tination for orphans, penal exiles, and converts, and a land of sexual laxity, Brazil
gained an early reputation for the low status of its immigrants, but also as a place
of rapid social mobility where land could be acquired easily, and where the arrivals
could shed the humble manners that “poverty had imposed on them in Portugal, and
their mestizo sons shed their red skins like snakes and used the most honorific titles in everything” (Gandavo 1922 [1574], 34).

In a few Brazilian port cities, the Iberian urban traditions of organisation and government also flourished, but a supporting network of smaller villages and towns remained weak, and by the 1560s their functions had been usurped to some extent by the sugar mills that with their chapels, slaves, collections of artisans and workers, and concentrations of population took the place of secondary towns. As one observer put it, each mill was like “a commonwealth unto itself” (Pudsey 2000 [1670], 3: 25). As the sugar industry boomed and the demand for labourers grew, the planters turned first to the enslavement of native peoples despite the opposition of the Jesuits or tried to employ work gangs contracted from the Jesuit villages. After 1580 and the union of Spain and Portugal, there were occasionally pleas by the settlers in Brazil to have the encomienda introduced there as well, but the Habsburg monarchs so anxious to end the institution in the Spanish Indies had no interest to see it reborn in their Portuguese dominions. By the 1620s, the indigenous slaves that had predominated in the Brazilian sugar mills had been mostly replaced by enslaved Africans. The sugar planters, some of whom had been government officials or merchants, controlled the municipal councils and thus the local economic conditions (Fragoso 2006). They were a colonial elite with pretentions to the status of nobility, but unlike Spanish America, their social prominence and status was not based so much on the control of the indigenous labour as it was on the growing slave population of African origin. So long as the imperial government was content to tax commerce and assure the planters of a continual supply of Africans through a relatively secure slave trade, and so long as the crown meddled little in the treatment of the slaves or in private economic decisions, the planter elites in the most prosperous captaincies were relatively satisfied.

In poorer or more marginal regions where African slaves were harder to acquire that was not the case. The little town of São Paulo which in 1600 still had under 2,000 residents was a good example. There, despite laws against enslavement of Indians, houses and farms depended on large numbers of “administered” Indians in various forms of tutelage. The principal families counted upon hundreds of Indian workers and dependents. Families that were “rich in archers”, that is, in Indian auxiliaries, became the elites of the region. In areas like this and in the Amazonian regions of Pará and Maranhão, indigenous labourers remained the key to wealth and the cause of conflict between the crown, the missionaries, and the colonists, creating a situation similar to the Spanish American battles over the encomienda in the previous century.

THE MATURE COLONIES CA. 1550–1700

In the Spanish Indies processes and patterns developed in the 70 or so years after Columbus’ landfall evolved over time into the stable practices of a mature colonial society. By this time, Spain had created the Council of the Indies, a House of Trade, and a merchant guild to handle the business and administration of empire. In the Indies, by around 1570, the consolidation of a more formal and stable regimen had been more or less achieved at least in the major colonial cities. The timing of this transition in terms of the active role of the state and the subordination
of private powers appears to be directly linked to the tremendous production of silver in the Spanish American mines. By the close of the sixteenth century, a certain social and demographic balance had been achieved. The Church hierarchy and diocesan organisation had been firmly established (31 bishoprics had been created in the sixteenth century), and the full range of Spanish social, religious, and legal structures had been reproduced, but with complexities and variations created by social mobility, cultural interchange, and by the sexual and cultural interactions of Spaniards and the indigenous populations and with Africans and their descendants. In terms of population, the indigenous demographic crises of the periods of first contact and conquest persisted. The great typhus outbreaks of 1576 in New Spain and 1588 in Peru were devastating, but by ca. 1630 these terrible losses were now replaced to some extent by an equilibrium and a slow recovery of the indigenous population and of the population of in general, but once again with considerable regional variations in its chronology and intensity. The importation of Africans expanded during the period of the Iberian union (1580–1640) when the Portuguese were the principal suppliers, but it continued thereafter as well. The precise dimensions of the trade are still in debate, but they nevertheless underline the central importance of slavery, the slave trade, and Africans in the formation and occupation of the two Iberian empires in the Americas (Borucki, Eltis, and Wheat 2015).

Immigration from Europe continued, at a level of perhaps 4,000 newcomers a year in the first half of the seventeenth century. By 1630, the population of Spaniards in the Indies had reached 75,000 vecinos, or about 450,000 individuals, but they were increasingly native born, and although whites were never a majority of the colonial population, they were now numerous enough to create a market to support significant trade with Europe as well as to create a demand for local goods and services.

The direct and active role of the king and the empire in the governance of the Indies was a principal marker of the conclusion of Conquest society. In each conquered region, after about a decade, the crown had moved to replace the conquistador captains with royal officials. A viceroy was sent to Mexico in 1535 and to Peru in 1541, and since the administration of justice was theoretically one of the monarch’s principal functions, ten royal courts of appeal (audiencias) staffed by university-trained lawyers who were essentially royal bureaucrats had been placed in the principal regional cities. Along with the highly trained judges came a myriad of lower officials, treasury officers, administrators, notaries, and lawyers, all of whom were part of an expansion of government under imperial control, as too were the large retinues of relatives, servants, supporters, and advisors that made up the viceregal courts (Cañeque 2004; Valenzuela 2001). Confronted by this bureaucratisation, the disgruntled conquistadors and their descendants objected to their loss of power. The iconic battlefield in this conflict of empire against local interests had been the struggle over control of the Indians and the perpetuity of the encomienda fought out in the 1550s and 1560s. Once the issue was settled, the viceroys instituted a state operated labour system or repartimiento which forced native communities to provide workers, but with exception of the mining labour mita that supplied the Peruvian mines, by the mid-seventeenth century a wage labour market predominated in most of Spanish America, employing indigenous workers who had
left their communities and growing numbers of former slaves, humble Europeans, and mestizos who now were becoming the colonial population.

Economic and demographic transformations supported the social system created in the previous century. The colonial elites remained powerful, but their economic base now changed. The remaining encomenderos and now landed elites and mine owners competed for and shared power with large-scale merchants who controlled the export of silver and the import of European luxury items. Family alliances were formed through marriage and no matter what the origins of wealth or prominence, acquisition of landed property became a general elite goal. The contraction and relocation of native populations created an opportunity for encomenderos and other Spaniards to purchase, occupy, or take lands. This was the great formative period of the haciendas, large landed estates supplying markets in the cities and mining towns with grains and meat. These estates, while often in conflict with indigenous communal lands, became increasingly dependent on indigenous workers participating in the wage labour market. In the cities, the demands for inexpensive textiles and other goods lead to the development of small sweatshop factories employing thousands of indigenous workers (mostly women) in cities such as Puebla, Mexico City, Lima, and Quito. From the point of view of Spain, however, the key to the economic fortunes of the Indies and what made up over 85% of the value of what was shipped to Spain were the precious metals from the silver mines such as Potosí in Peru or Zacatecas in Mexico, and to a lesser extent the gold from Quito, Popayan, and western Amazonia. The mining centres like Potosí with a population over 120,000 around 1630 became great urban concentrations and rivaled or surpassed the viceregal capitals like Lima (22,000 in 1615) or Mexico City (ca. 50,000 in 1630). All these cities attracted capital and workers and created markets for locally produced goods. It is difficult, however, to separate the local from the international economy. Silver exports to Spain crested in the early seventeenth century and then seemed to fall off considerably by 1640, causing an imperial political crisis by the end of the century, but these signs of imperial downturn may have been evidence of the growing importance of American markets and American production (Romano 1993). In any case, the wealth of the Indies had the effect of attracting foreign rivals anxious to establish their own claims in the Americas, and who were no longer satisfied with contraband trade or piracy. The French, English, and Dutch fought out their imperial rivalries with Spain in the Americas, but with few exceptions Spain’s permanent territorial losses in the Indies were suffered in unoccupied and sparsely settled areas and not in the heartlands of the viceroyalties.

Finally, this period also witnessed the consolidation and elaboration of the regime of ethnic and racial categories derived from the contact of Europeans, Native Americans, and Africans. Immigration from Spain continued, but the majority of those accepted as Spaniards were now locally born just as the majority of indigenous people by now had been born under Spain’s rule, often in reorganised or relocated towns and villages. The concept of two distinct communities, the “republic of the Indians” and the “republic of the Spaniards” (which included everyone who was not an Indian) continued to influence social policy and law, but a key feature of the mature colonial society was cultural hybridity and the proliferation of people of mixed origins, mestizos, mulattos etc., the so-called castes. Estimates vary but at by 1650 they made up about 6% of the population of the Spanish Indies, a figure
slightly less than the percentage of whites, but a number that was increasing rapidly in part from demographic growth and in part because claims to mestizo status freed indigenous people from their tribute obligations. Mestizos did not have an identity as such since their origin was, in fact, the very negation of the idea of distinct racial categories, but in the central areas at least there was a relative decline in their status from the conquest period when their numbers were relatively small, their skills as cultural brokers were valued, and many of the first generation were the children of Spaniards and high-born indigenous women and thus accepted in the community as Spaniards. By the seventeenth century as their numbers had grown and further miscegenation had taken place, their status fell in the colonial core areas, but in peripheral regions, mestizos, especially women, still enjoyed relatively high status and acceptance as Spaniards, and in some regions like the Caribbean, and in areas of New Granada, the term mestizo virtually fell into disuse (Schwartz 1997; Rappaport 2014). By 1700 mestizos made up about 25% of the colonial population. Overall, the castas filled myriad intermediate occupations and statuses within the “republic of the Spaniards” and along with a stream of Spanish-speaking, acculturated Indians and the continuing arrival of new immigrants from Spain, they continued to expand and elaborate the Hispanic sector.

The consolidation of the colonial society in Brazil had a different look and feel to it due to the economic basis of the colony and because of its relationship to Portugal, its metropole. After 1570 the sugar economy of the northeastern captaincies of Pernambuco and Bahia provided the basis for the increase of the slave trade, growth of population, and the expansion of government. Other missionary orders (Franciscans, Benedictines, Carmelites) joined the Jesuits in the 1580s, new monasteries and impressive churches were constructed, a court of appeals was installed by 1609, and the institutions of Portuguese society and government were being installed or reproduced. By 1585 Brazil had 120 sugar mills and a total colonial population of about 30,000, but 85% of the mills and of the population were in the two major captaincies and their dependent areas. The 60 years (1580–1640) that Portugal was ruled by the Habsburg monarchs, was the height of Brazil’s dominance of the Atlantic sugar markets. By 1637, Brazil’s 350 sugar mills were producing 14,000 tons of sugar annually, and as its sugar industry developed, the colony drew a stream of Portuguese immigrants and a growing concentration of African slaves, their numbers increasing from 4,000–8,000 arrivals a year during the seventeenth century. Salvador, the capital had a population of ca. 25,000 and Olinda and its port area of Recife probably about 15,000, but as urban centres, their size was small when compared to the main cities of the Spanish Indies. As to be expected the sugar planter families and merchants became the elites, controlling the municipal councils and other local institutions and using marriage arrangements and other social contacts to achieve their social and political goals. By about 1640, Brazil had overtaken India as the economically most important colony in the Portuguese empire.

As in Spanish America, Brazil’s wealth also made it a target for the Spanish monarchy’s international rivals. From 1630 the Dutch occupied Pernambuco and much of the coast from the Sao Francisco river to the Amazon and with the cooperation of Portuguese planters who remained, they competed as a sugar producer until their expulsion in 1654, after which time the new Caribbean sugar colonies of the
Dutch, English, and French began to compete directly with the Brazilian plantations. As a result of that competition, the second half of the century was a time of troubles in Brazil, caused in large part by the falling price of sugar, the rising price of slaves, and by a series of political crises and natural disasters.

There are three aspects of the mature Brazilian colony in the seventeenth century that deserve comment. First, in many ways until the eighteenth century, Portuguese America was really three distinct colonies, and at various times the Portuguese Crown had, in fact, tried to separate them administratively. The northeastern captaincies producing sugar and later tobacco were the most populous and wealthiest, they were the colonial core where the hand of imperial government was the strongest. Sao Paulo and the temperate lands to the south remained sparsely settled, and while this region would eventually turn to livestock raising, in the seventeenth century its settlers were still practicing subsistence farming, searching for elusive mines, raiding the interior or Spanish Jesuit missions for Indian slaves, and contraband trading across the frontiers with Paraguay and eventually Potosí. North of Pernambuco, the vast state of Maranhão, administered as a separate colony after 1621, was not occupied until the seventeenth century, and its principal towns São Luís (1614) and Belem (1615) remained tiny, precarious settlements in a vast territory that lived by extracting forest products, depending on Indian labourers, and hoping eventually to start up sugar plantations. As late as 1684 the whole Amazonian region had fewer than a thousand Portuguese householders. These northern and southern peripheries long remained marginal areas characterised by a heavy presence of missionaries, large numbers of indigenous people and the continued use of the Tupi-based lingua general as a means of communication, little international commerce, and a minimal presence of imperial government. In terms of political structure and wealth, they lagged at least half a century behind the wealthier sugar plantation zones, and their relationship to them was much like the relationship of Paraguay, or Central America to the viceregal centres in Spanish America.

A second distinctive feature in this period was the integration of Brazil into a south Atlantic imperial system especially in terms of its trade with Angola. The Portuguese had long experience in Guinea, the Congo and São Tomé, but after the opening of Angola in 1575, it became the major supplier of slaves to Brazil and its importance was summed up by the common phrase: “Whoever says sugar, says Brazil and whoever says Brazil, says Angola.” The Dutch realised this fundamental connection when in 1641 they seized Portugal’s West African slaving stations including Angola’s main ports of Benguela and Luanda, and when the Portuguese took back Luanda in 1648, they used troops raised in Brazil. For much of the second half of the seventeenth century, governors from northeastern Brazil often served in Angola as well, and the two colonies became intimately linked by colonial policy, but above all by the booming bilateral trade of Bahian tobacco and Rio de Janeiro rum for the sons and daughters of Angola. Rio de Janeiro, in its origins a minor port with close ties to São Paulo and the southern margins, emerged as new plantation zone in the late seventeenth century, in large part because of its proximity to, and trade with Angola. While Spanish America also depended on the slave trade, it did not develop the imperial administrative and economic ties that linked Brazil and Africa, especially to the regions of Angola, and to a lesser extent the Bight of Benin (Alencastro 2000).
By the end of the seventeenth century Brazil had a population of roughly 300,000. In areas of the northeast and the state of Maranhão new territories had been opened up by cattlemen to supply the coastal cities and sugar mills with beef and oxen, and new, sometimes enormous, land grants had been awarded to them. The crown, anxious to populate its Brazilian colonies, hoped to mobilise their private initiative and capital to help in that process. Along with the growing number of slaves, cities and countryside now had a large population of mixed origins including ex-slaves, their descendants, mestizos, and whites that constituted the “people.”

Finally, it is important to note that while the wealth generated by sugar and a few other products funded the maturation and consolidation of the Brazilian colony, in comparison to a similar process in Spanish America, that maturity was attenuated in a variety of ways by policies that limited the reproduction of elements of Portuguese culture. Portuguese imperial policy emphasised the integration of Brazil with the metropolis not as separate kingdoms, but as part of a composite monarchy as in Spanish America. No separate institutions were created in Portugal to administer Brazil even though it had become the keystone of the colonial empire. In Brazil, provincial governors were encouraged to correspond directly with Lisbon, viceroys for Brazil were not appointed regularly until the eighteenth century, there was no archbishop in the colony until 1676, and no permanent Inquisition tribunal operated in Brazil. In an even greater contrast with Spanish America, there was no printing press or a university in Brazil, an absence which thus required the Brazilian elites to constantly return to Portugal for their education. Portugal did employ its Brazilian-born white subjects in the metropolis or elsewhere in the empire, but the policies that limited the development of a distinct colonial culture or self-consciousness among white elites were intentional. A nativist or creole consciousness was slow to form, but not absent.

The last decade of the seventeenth and first decade of the eighteenth century marked a considerable change in the character in the American colonies of both empires. A dynastic crisis in Spain and the resulting War of the Spanish Succession (1700–1713) placed the Bourbons on the throne of Spain and initiated a series of reforms and a change in the balance of commercial and political power that would eventually have profound effects on the Spanish Indies. In Brazil, the discovery of gold ca. 1695 in the interior opened whole new areas to settlement, stimulated a tremendous increase in immigration from Portugal, and a sharp rise of the slave trade. As in Spanish America, during the following century both the residents in Brazil and the makers of policy in Europe changed their attitude about these colonies and about their relationship to each other.

NOTE

1 I have chosen ca. 1579 even though the viceroyalties had been established earlier. I would note the Laws of Settlement of 1573, the establishment of episcopal authority by the Ordenanza de patronazgo (1574), the establishment of the Inquisition of Lima (1570, and Mexico (1571), and the active administration of Viceroy Francisco de Toledo (1569–1581), including the creation of the mita, the introduction of the amalgamation process in the mining of silver (1571), and the subsequent royal control of the mercury necessary, all point
to the consolidation of imperial rule. The fall of the neo-Inca state at Vicabamba in 1572 provides a fitting symbolic end to the Conquest era, although the last Maya stronghold Tayasal at Lake Peten in Guatemala, did not fall until 1697.

WORKS CITED


Gandavo, P. de M. de (1922 [1570]) The Histories of Brazil, J. Stetson (trans.), New York: Cortes Society.


Lohmann Villena, G. (1947) Los Americanos en las órdenes nobiliarias (1520–1900), Madrid: CSIC.


